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STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR, I/GNEA, B/BXN,  
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON LEBANON

Editorial Commentary

-- "Strategic Review"

Columnist Basem Twaisi writes on the op-ed page of centrist, independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad (08/31): "In theory, active parties in the Middle East, from within and from without, should be now conducting strategic reviews in light of the new facts on the ground.... The Israeli aggressive war against Lebanon and its open-ended and vague potential repercussions would not be the reason for conducting such a review, but rather that crisis that has been around for more than three years, of which the war was only one of its aspects.... The region has not seen this current state of political void since 1967. The possibilities of war and peace are absolute.... The regional players are now running without a compass and direction. The current political void means the inability of regional and international parties and their lack of maturity of will to conduct immediate and radical surgical operations for the region's problems.... The most significant aspects of the political void - with which the United States and Israel react by attempting to make their own games on their own - could be seen in the behavior of Arab axes and their complete closure and in Iran's behavior towards Arab causes and its stinginess in opening channels of dialogue with the Arab parties. This void can be seen in the behavior of each of the Palestinian presidency and the government vis-`-vis one another and vis-`-vis the requirements of the Palestinian cause, as well as in the behavior of Hizbullah and the other Lebanese powers. The most important thing about these aspects is misjudging other parties' stands, their capabilities and their reactions."

-- "From Nasrallah's apologetic talk"

Columnist Jamil Nimri writes on the back-page of centrist, independent Arabic daily Al-Ghad (08/31): "Hizbullah did not expect the Israeli reaction; that was possible to conclude from previous remarks made by Nasrallah. But for the man to say a few days ago that he would not have ordered the operation had he known the volume of the reaction, this is the climax and as such requires a re-discussion of the issue.... Hizbullah miscalculated. Yet, the party's courage and fine combat performance as well as the solidarity and unity of all the Lebanese forces and the internal front have all sent Israel's arrogance back to where it came from, despite the fact that the price on Lebanon was quite high. Therefore, no one wants to blame Hizbullah, and then again no one wants to stand up and gloat about the victory."

-- "Nasrallah's realism"

Columnist Samih Al-Maitah writes on the back-page of centrist, independent, Arabic daily Al-Ghad (08/29): "Hizbullah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah did well when he gave an objective evaluation void of exaggeration and embellishments to one of the aspects of the Zionist aggression against Lebanon. Nasrallah said in a television interview the day before yesterday that if he had known that capturing the two Israeli soldiers would lead to Lebanon's destruction, he would not have ordered it. This is a professional and objective confession that the capture operation was not accompanied by a sound estimation of the volume of the Israeli reaction, and that the price that Lebanon paid as a result was too high.... Sheikh Nasrallah's realistic and rational words constitute a point in his favor.... This bold talk from Sheikh Nasrallah however does not undermine the steadfastness of the resistance in the face of the aggression and does not nullify the fact that Israel suffered in that aggression...."

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